

1.95
Sul

[no. 4]

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
The Farm Security Administration
and
The Bureau of Agricultural Economics
Cooperating

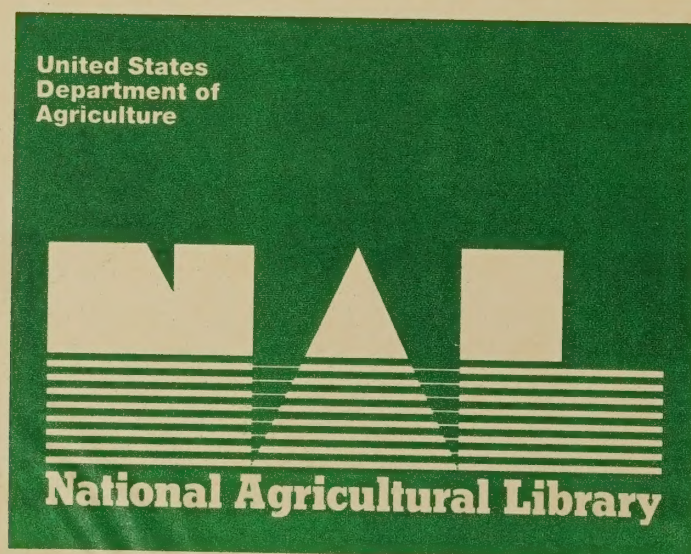
SURVEY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR CONDITIONS IN ARCHULETA COUNTY, COLORADO

Tom Vasey, Farm Security Administration
and
Josiah C. Folsom, Bureau of Agricultural Economics

Washington, D. C.
November 1937

This publication is one of a series of 11 with similar titles by Tom Vasey and Josiah C. Folsom. The reports are based on surveys made in the late summer and early autumn of 1936 of the economic and social conditions of adult agricultural laborers. The counties studied represent various types of farming in different parts of the United States, as follows:

<u>State</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Type of Farming</u>
California	Placer	Fruit
Colorado	Archuleta	Stock-ranch
Illinois	Livingston	Corn
Iowa	Hamilton	Corn-Hog
Kansas	Pawnee	Winter wheat
Kentucky	Todd	Tobacco
Louisiana	Concordia Parish	Cotton (eastern)
Minnesota	Lac qui Parle	Small grain
Pennsylvania	Wayne	Dairy
Tennessee	Fentress	Self-sufficing
Texas	Karnes	Cotton (western)



SURVEY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR CONDITIONS IN ARCHULETA COUNTY, COLORADO

By Tom Vasey, Farm Security Administration
and

Josiah C. Folsom, Bureau of Agricultural Economics

During the summer and fall of 1936, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Social Research Section of the Farm Security Administration /1 made studies of wages and working conditions affecting farm laborers in 11 selected counties in as many States. The funds necessary for this research were provided by the Works Progress Administration. Archuleta County, Colorado, in which ranch labor is prevalent, was chosen as one of those to be surveyed.

Enumerators were engaged to canvass hired farm laborers and their employers, and schedules were used to record the information secured from each group. The schedule designed for laborers was rather complete, covering, in addition to age, education, and other such personal characteristics, job descriptions, wage rates, work histories for the preceding 12 months, and participation in community affairs. Farm operators were questioned concerning wage rates, fluctuations in numbers of employees, and methods of obtaining labor. /2

The enumerators were directed to use the limited time available for reaching as nearly as possible all the farms in the county hiring labor, except those that are not primarily dependent on agriculture as a source of income. The exceptions included country estates, livestock dealers, institutions, feed lots, boarding and lodging places, and unclassified farms. As to the laborers, the enumerators were instructed to interview "only those hired to do the work of adults at adult wages." This eliminated all unpaid family labor and any child labor receiving wage rates below those of adults. "Hired labor" or "employees," as the terms are used in this study, refer to persons who work for wages and are dependent on wages paid by the farm operator. The amount of these wages does not depend on the income derived from livestock or crops.

Archuleta County lies along the southern border of the State, west of the Continental Divide. Little or no land is cultivated, the county being largely devoted to cattle and sheep production. Quite naturally, labor demands are for haying and for the care of livestock. At the time of year when this survey was conducted -- September 10 to October 10 -- many of the herds of sheep had been driven south into New Mexico for winter pasture; and the shipping of cattle was over

/1 The Resettlement Administration, prior to September 1, 1937.

/2 Representatives of the U. S. Department of Agriculture directed the work but the Experiment Station and State College officials gave suggestions concerning the locality to be studied; the enumerators were Ralph Staley of Denver and Bellarmino Martinez of Pagosa Springs.

for the fall. Consequently, at that time few paid laborers were found in the county.

Schedules were taken from as many ranch hands as could be located; from their employers, regardless of whether they were owners or tenants; and from numerous ranch operators who occasionally hired labor but who were employing none at that time. The data presented here are taken largely from the schedules of the 66 laborers interviewed.

General Characteristics

Two types of workers predominate -- sheep herders and cowhands, the former usually Mexicans and the latter other whites. Thirteen of those who are included in this study were Mexicans, 49 were other whites, and 4 were not reported as to race. Most of those who were working on the ranches of Archuleta County in the fall of 1936 were young persons, one-half of them between 20 and 29 years of age (Table 1). The average age of the other whites was 10 years less than that of the Mexicans. Although the amounts of schooling varied, there was a slight tendency for the younger workers to have more. The Mexicans averaged 5.8 grades as compared with 8.5 for the other whites. Only 1 of the former group was among the 25 who had gone beyond the eighth grade.

Table 1.-- Age and education of 66 agricultural laborers,
Archuleta County, Colorado, September 1936

Age	Total	Grades completed			
		0-4	5-7	8	9-12
15	-	-	-	-	-
16	1	-	-	1	-
17	2	-	-	1	1
18	4	-	1	-	3
19	2	1	-	-	1
20 - 29	34	2	5	11	16
30 - 39	10	2	3	4	1
40 - 49	11	5	1	3	2
50 - 59	1	-	-	1	-
60 - 69	1	-	-	-	1
Totals	66	10	10	21	25

Nearly two-thirds of these cowhands and sheep herders were unmarried (Table 2) and had no dependents (Table 3). Because of the nature of their jobs, many of them must lead a solitary life in camps or cabins far from other ranch settlements. Particularly is this true of the sheep herders.

Three-fourths of all the workers make their homes in either Colorado or New Mexico (Table 4). The Mexicans, with one exception, were natives of one of these two States, but the other whites have come to Archuleta County from various parts of the Nation.

Table 2.- Marital status by age of 66 agricultural laborers, Archuleta County, Colorado, September 1936

Marital status	Total	Age					
		15-19 : years	20-29 : years	30-39 : years	40-49 : years	50-59 : years	60-69 : years
Unmarried	40	9	24	2	4	-	1
Married	23	-	10	8	4	1	-
Widowed	3	-	-	-	3	-	-
Totals	66	9	34	10	11	1	1

Table 3.- Dependents of 66 agricultural laborers, Archuleta County, Colorado, September 1936

Number of dependents	Laborers	
	Number	Percent
0	42	63.6
1	20	30.3
2	4	6.1
Totals	66	100.0

Table 4.- Nativity and residence of 66 agricultural laborers, Archuleta County, Colorado, September 1936

State	Nativity		Residence	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Colorado	22	33.3	40	60.6
New Mexico	9	13.6	10	15.1
Kansas	8	12.1	5	7.6
Oklahoma	7	10.6	4	6.1
Texas	5	7.6	2	3.0
Other States	15	22.8	5	7.6
Totals	66	100.0	66	100.0

Some of the ranch hands of this county had previously followed other occupations. Slightly more than one-half had been agricultural laborers a year previous to the interview; one had been a farm owner, and another a tenant operator. A number of them had been farm foremen but most of the others had come from construction or mining jobs.

Income

There was considerable variation in the income reports (Table 5). As none of the group had dependents contributing to their incomes, most of them relied solely upon their ranch work for a livelihood. Nine had had other employment during the year and 7 had received help through either direct or work relief. Although total earnings ranged from \$8 to \$1,174, 43 percent reported less than \$150.

Table 5.- Total income, September 1935 - August 1936, of 58 agricultural workers, Archuleta County, Colorado

		: Agricultural:		Nonagricultural:			
Total	: Number:	Percent:	earnings	: earnings	: Relief income		
income	:	:	Average	: Number:	Average	: Number:	Average
\$ 1 - 49	10	17.2	\$25.78	1 <u>/1</u>	\$25.00	1	\$132.00 <u>/2</u>
50 - 99	8	13.8	58.86	1	52.00	1	60.00 <u>/3</u>
100 - 149	7	12.1	113.00	-	-	1	120.00 <u>/3</u>
150 - 199	5	8.6	158.20	1	65.00	-	-
200 - 249	3	5.2	229.00	-	-	-	-
250 - 299	2	3.4	212.50	-	-	1	108.00 <u>/3</u>
300 - 349	4	6.9	313.00	-	-	-	-
350 - 399	4	6.9	245.50	1	104.00	1	360.00 <u>/3</u>
400 and over <u>/4</u>	15	25.9	493.85	6	553.33	2	180.00 <u>/3</u>
Totals and averages	58	100.0	224.13	9	393.44	1	132.00 <u>/2</u>
						6	168.00 <u>/3</u>

/1 Dependent reporting, not included in column total.

/2 Direct relief.

/3 Work relief.

/4 Widely scattered reports as high as \$1,174.

Nonagricultural earnings were more important in the higher income groups than in the lower. Two-fifths of the laborers whose incomes were above \$400 reported work off the ranch, but only one-fourteenth, or 3, of those earning less than that reported work outside of agriculture. However, the two highest incomes of \$1,174 and \$960 were primarily ranch earnings; only \$50 of the former came from nonagricultural earnings.

Few of these men had full-time employment; only 12 had had 270 or more days of work during the 12 months preceding the interview (Table 6). Among those employed solely in agriculture nearly one-half had had less than 90 days of work. Those with mixed employment fared better, over 50 percent of them having had more than 150 days of work during the year. Although there was much variation, nonagricultural work furnished an average of $1\frac{1}{2}$ times as many days as did work on the ranches. Of the 16 who reported some nonagricultural labor 6 had been employed on work-relief jobs.

Table 6.- Days worked in agriculture and in mixed employment by 66 farm laborers, Archuleta County, Colorado

Days worked	: Agriculture :		Mixed employment	
	: Number	: Number	: Average in: agriculture	: Average in: nonagriculture
0 - 29	16	-	-	-
30 - 59	5	2	11	40
60 - 89	2	-	-	-
90 - 119	11	-	-	-
120 - 149	5	5	45	87
150 - 179	1	2	140	25
180 - 209	-	2	162	32
210 - 239	-	2	109	106
240 - 269	-	1	8	253
270 - 312	10	2	11	292
Totals	50	16	69	105

Assets

Few tangible possessions were reported by this group. The item most frequently named was an automobile, 23 of these laborers owning cars. Only five, 3 Mexicans and 2 other whites, owned land, and 1 laborer among the other whites owned his own house. Two persons had bank accounts and the whites, exclusive of the Mexicans, carried an average of \$1,100 each in life insurance. Not one of these workers reported ownership of live-stock.

Wage Rates

About half the laborers were paid by the day, the other half by the month. The type of work reported had little to do with the basis of pay; some haystackers were receiving monthly wages and some cowhands were being paid by the day. Those who had been working on the job more than a month were generally paid on the longer time basis.

Without regard to perquisites the average rates of pay as reported by the laborer were \$38.97 by the month and \$1.48 by the day; the operators reported \$36.99 and \$1.52 respectively (Tables 7 and 8). Most of the

laborers received board as a part of their pay but evaluation of this item is difficult. The average wages of a worker who receives a house, presumably a more valuable perquisite, are higher than those of one who receives board. Apparently the more desirable workers receive more cash as well as more valuable wages in kind. Although workers in farming areas are usually provided with minor perquisites such as milk or vegetables, these were not available to the workers in Archuleta County.

Table 7.- Monthly wage rates with specified perquisites paid agricultural laborers, Archuleta County, Colorado, September 1936

	Laborers' reports				Operators' reports			
Rate		: Without:	With	: With		: Without:	With	: With
	: Total	: board	: board	: house	: Total	: board	: board	: house
\$10.00	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
20.00	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
25.00	6	-	6	-	7	-	7	-
30.00	11	-	11	-	19	-	19	-
32.50	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-
35.00	3	1	1	1	4	2	2	-
40.00	1	-	1	-	4	-	4	-
45.00	2	-	-	2	3	-	1	2
50.00	4	3	-	1	3	1	1	1
65.00	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
75.00	4	-	-	4	1	1	-	-
80.00	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
125.00	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Totals	34	4	21	9	44	5	35	4
Averages	\$38.97	\$46.25	\$27.86	\$61.67	\$36.99	\$52.00	\$31.50	\$66.25

Table 8.- Daily wage rates with specified perquisites paid agricultural laborers, Archuleta County, Colorado, September 1936

	Laborers' reports			Operators' reports		
Rate	:	Without	With	:	Without	With
	Total	board	board	Total	board	board
\$0.75	1	-	1	-	-	-
1.00	4	-	4	6	-	6
1.25	4	-	4	17	-	17
1.50	14	3	11	81	1	80
1.75	1	-	1	7	2	5
2.00	6	3	3	7	4	3
2.50	-	-	-	1	1	-
5.00	-	-	-	1	1	-
Totals	30	6	24	120	9	111
Averages	\$1.48	\$1.75	\$1.42	\$1.52	\$2.28	\$1.46

Tenure of Employment

Long-time employment was not prevalent. Although the study was conducted during a relatively quiet period, when little seasonal labor was employed, only 10 of those interviewed had been on their jobs before March 1936 (Table 9). One-half had obtained their present jobs since the last of July. As a rule, seasonal laborers can count on only 4 to 8 weeks, primarily in haying. At the time of visit the ranches were averaging 0.49 employees; during their busiest period, generally in August, this rose to 3.3 and in the slack season it fell to 0.23.

Table 9.- Date 66 present farm jobs began, Archuleta County, Colorado, September 1936

Date	Number	Cumulative percent
Previous to 1936	10	15.2
1936 January	-	15.2
February	-	15.2
March	2	18.2
April	5	25.8
May	3	30.3
June	1	31.8
July	11	48.5
August	11	65.2
September	23	100.0

The methods of securing jobs or laborers were similar to those found in other agricultural sections; direct contact between the employer and prospective employee was the most common. No laborer said that an operator had made the first contact, but 9 out of 10 ranch operators said they generally sought their laborers. Three operators reported the use of an employment or a relief agency.

Table 10.- Methods of placement of agricultural laborers, Archuleta County, Colorado, September 1936

Method	Laborers' reports		Operators' reports	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent /1
Laborers' search	54	81.8	56	30.4
Operators' search	-	-	164	89.1
Through a friend	10	15.2	-	-
Public employment agency	-	-	1	.5
Relief agency	-	-	2	1.1
Miscellaneous	2	3.0	2	1.1

/1 Percent of 184 operators who report a given method. As each operator may report more than one method, this column does not total 100 percent.

Community Participation

In this locality farm organizations are almost nonexistent but the workers have many unorganized social contacts. Practically all reported overnight trips to visit friends or relatives, and nearly all who were interviewed attended movies, went shopping, or participated in community entertainments and religious gatherings. Nearly all reported several fishing trips. There was little or no difference between Mexicans and other whites in either the frequency or nature of these informal contacts.

Table 11.- Community participation of 62 agricultural laborers /1
Archuleta County, Colorado, September 1935 - September 1936

Activity	: Mexicans			: Other whites		
	:Number	:Percent:		:Number	:Percent:	
	:report-	:report-:	:Average	:report-	:report-:	:Average
	: ing	: ing	:reported	: ing	: ing	:reported
Visits to friends or relatives	13	100.0	28.5	48	98.0	15.2
Shopping	13	100.0	28.6	46	93.9	20.0
Fishing trips	11	84.6	12.0	46	93.9	12.6
Movies	10	76.9	15.0	46	93.9	15.3
Community enter- tainments	6	46.2	13.5	36	73.5	6.8
Religious meetings	7	53.8	7.3	24	49.0	4.3
Ball games	6	46.2	17.3	24	49.0	9.5
Circus	4	30.8	1.2	10	20.4	1.7
Court day	4	30.8	1.0	5	10.2	1.0

/1 Four not reported as to race, therefore not included in this table;
13 Mexicans, 49 other whites.

There are marked differences between the ranches of Archuleta County and the farms of the other areas studied. They are noticed especially in the type of work to be done and in the basis of pay. Whereas a specified wage rate is more or less common to the other 10 sections, the sheep herders of this county are paid largely on a per-month per-head basis.

Short intervals of employment on ranches are interspersed with jobs in forestry, construction, or mining. The periods of employment are relatively short and incomes are low. Work is not divided on a racial basis nor is the position of the workers in the community determined by that factor.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY



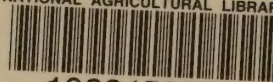
1022459674

U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

APR - 9 1998

CATALOGING PREP.

* NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY



1022459674